

## COST OF DEPOTS IN FLORIDA.

JULY 6, 1842.

Read, and laid upon the table.

Mr. MERIWETHER, from the Committee on Public Expenditures, submitted the following

### REPORT:

*The Committee on Public Expenditures presented the following report:*

The extraordinary cost of the Florida war has induced the committee to examine the character of its expenditures. At a very early period of the session, they called on the War Department for such information as would show the cost of transportation, the purchase of provisions, and the sale of any portion of them, and the difference between the sale and purchase; the purchase of horses, mules, and oxen, of wagons, carts, and boats; the cost of depots, including the cost of transportation of materials for them; and much other information, demonstrating the actual cost of this war to the Government. They were informed, however, that the great number of vouchers to be examined, and the large sums of money expended in them, the amounts being necessarily much blended together, would prevent the information from being furnished, in all probability, during the session of Congress. A portion, however, has been furnished, in the original vouchers, which relate to the erection of depots and buildings for the army; upon which the committee now propose to report, so far as the facts presented will enable them to do so. The labor to the Department would have been immense, and that of the committee very tedious and protracted. The excuse furnished is therefore every way satisfactory. The investigations to be made by the committee would have consumed the entire session, if no other duties were demanded of its members. But the public good does require the examination and exposure of the abuses which have occurred in the conduct of this Indian war.

No adequate idea seems to have been formed of the extent to which the expenditures have gone. In every department of the army, and for almost every moneyed transaction, the most wanton prodigality has marked them. In the absence of many of the facts which the committee desired to present to the House, they have been compelled to rely upon incomplete statements, found in the public documents, which, though true to the extent they go, yet necessarily present imperfect accounts and general results not so satisfactory as would have been the detailed facts, which the committee were desirous of presenting. Of this class are the expenditures for wagons and carts. In the returns of "receipts and expenditures," there are statements of the annual amounts paid for three years;

the most, if not all, of which articles were purchased for the service in Florida, to wit:

1838, cost of wagons, carts, &c.	-	-	-	-	\$128,279
1839, cost of wagons, carts, &c.	-	-	-	-	198,420
1840, cost of wagons, carts, &c.	-	-	-	-	144,515

Making for three years

471,214

Of the expenditures for horses, mules, provisions, and the like, the committee cannot present even general statements.

They present statements of the cost of six depots, which are derived from the original vouchers furnished by the Department, but which are not complete as to the whole cost, as will be hereafter explained. There are several depots the cost of which has not been estimated, as will be seen by future remarks in reference to them.

The following is the aggregate cost, as far as ascertained, of—

Depot at Tampa Bay	-	-	-	-	\$276,277
Depot at Jacksonville	-	-	-	-	62,609
Depot at Gary's Ferry	-	-	-	-	158,881
Depot at Cedar Keys	-	-	-	-	46,149
Depot at Pilatka	-	-	-	-	63,543
Depot at St. Augustine	-	-	-	-	58,251

Aggregate cost, as far as ascertained, of six depots

665,210

The details which make up this most extravagant cost of mere temporary depots, designed but to be held during the existence of hostilities, and to be abandoned when they shall cease, unappropriated for by any express legislation of Congress, and the charges deriving no other sanction from the representatives of the people than as an expenditure for the "suppression of Indian hostilities," out of which appropriation, in the discretion of the Department, they have been paid, the committee will now proceed to furnish; believing that, had Congress been called upon for appropriations, based upon estimates, for such large sums of money, for such insignificant objects, predicated upon estimates for such large amounts of materials and labor, and at such unreasonable and unconscionable prices, the representatives of the people would never, for a moment, have authorized or countenanced such an unpardonable waste of money, drawn from their constituents by taxation; and it is from the fact that these expenditures, so enormous in their amounts, have been made from a fund specifically appropriated for the "suppression of Indian hostilities," not anticipated by any reasonable construction or interpretation of the object designated, that their infidelity becomes the more prominent and the more odious.

Congress was obliged to rely, for information as to the wants of the service, upon those who were constitutionally required to furnish it. They could not properly withhold supplies for a war which they were advised were indispensably necessary. It was their duty to furnish them, and the corresponding duty of others to apply them in good faith to the objects contemplated, and none others. But it is believed that had the objects not been masked, but avowed, and an appropriation asked for more than a quarter of a million of dollars for a public depot at Tampa Bay, it would

have been rejected ; and instead of "corps of mechanics" being employed, and steamboat after steamboat of lumber and other building materials purchased, the army would have been left to employ its ample leisure hours in preparing the lumber and in erecting the buildings.

## COST OF DEPOT AT TAMPA BAY.

*Lumber.*

1836, 166,028 feet	-	-	-	-	-	\$3,966
1837, 658,427 "	-	-	-	-	-	11,821
1838, 111,806 "	-	-	-	-	-	1,873
1839, 192,003 "	-	-	-	-	-	3,815
1840, 55,703 "	-	-	-	-	-	1,563
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1,183,967 feet, costing	-	-	-	-	-	23,068
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1838, clapboards, 37,000	-	-	-	-	-	\$182 00
1839, do 1,100	-	-	-	-	-	5 50
1838, cutting 2,600 house logs	-	-	-	-	-	134 50
1837, 206,000 shingles	-	-	-	-	-	1,129 00
1839, 51,000 do	-	-	-	-	-	219 00
1840, 100,000 do	-	-	-	-	-	500 00
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Costing	-	-	-	-	-	2,170 00
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*Tools and materials for building, other than lumber.*

1836	-	-	-	-	-	\$7,541
1837	-	-	-	-	-	7,464
1838	-	-	-	-	-	16,863
1839	-	-	-	-	-	10,689
1840	-	-	-	-	-	8,600
1841	-	-	-	-	-	4,598
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Making	-	-	-	-	-	55,755
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*Mechanics and laborers.*

1836	-	-	-	-	-	\$3,091
1837	-	-	-	-	-	36,904
1838	-	-	-	-	-	66,198
1839	-	-	-	-	-	11,701
1840	-	-	-	-	-	12,208
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Making	-	-	-	-	-	130,102
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*Teamsters and cartmen.*

1837	-	-	-	-	-	\$15,014
1838	-	-	-	-	-	15,133
1839	-	-	-	-	-	7,625
1840	-	-	-	-	-	5,271
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Making	-	-	-	-	-	43,043
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*Transportation.*

The account for this item is so blended with the transportation for supplies for the army, that the correct amount cannot be ascertained. Only such sums have been estimated as were clearly connected with materials for the depot.

1836	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$3,498
1837	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,866
1838	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,380
1839	-	-	-	-	-	-	977
1840	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,418
Making							<u>16,139</u>

The total cost for erecting this depot, as far as ascertained, is, for

Materials and tools	-	-	-	-	-	\$55,755
Mechanics and laborers	-	-	-	-	-	136,102
Teamsters and cartmen	-	-	-	-	-	43,043
Transportation	-	-	-	-	-	16,139
Lumber and shingles	-	-	-	-	-	25,238
			Making	-	-	<u>276,277</u>

This enormous expenditure for a work so small and insignificant, and which might, under any thing like good management and economy, have been built by the troops at leisure times, without any cost, save for tools, nails, and hauling, not exceeding, in all, ten or fifteen thousand dollars, is a matter of surprise and astonishment. Its design was extravagant, the materials injudiciously selected, and the whole fabric suited to any thing but a temporary depot and barracks, as it is. To illustrate somewhat the extravagant notions which entered the head of the Government, a list of some of the articles purchased and the prices are here given.

*Lumber.*

1836, 40,000 feet, at	-	-	-	\$15	per thousand feet.
18,000 "	-	-	-	25	do
5,000 "	-	-	-	30	do
15,000 "	-	-	-	35	do
4,733 "	-	-	-	50	do
1837, 77,000 "	-	-	-	17	do
19,000 "	-	-	-	14	do
12,000 "	-	-	-	12	do
73,000 "	-	-	-	30	do
21,000 "	-	-	-	25	do
11,000 "	-	-	-	40	do
1838, 8,000 "	-	-	-	25	do
10,000 "	-	-	-	35	do
3,000 "	-	-	-	50	do
1839, 28,000 "	-	-	-	25	do
29,000 "	-	-	-	40	do



1839,	2,500	feet, at	-	-	-	\$45	per thousand feet.
	2,000	"	-	-	-	55	do
	2,800	"	-	-	-	67 80	do
1840,	18,751	"	-	-	-	25	do
	21,742	"	-	-	-	28	do
	3,410	"	-	-	-	38 50	do
	800	"	-	-	-	60	do

### Transportation.

The compensation paid for transporting lumber from New Orleans to Tampa Bay was *eleven* dollars per thousand feet.

*Cost of materials.*

1838,	1,000 brick -	-	-	-	- \$35	per thousand.
	11,750 "	-	-	-	- 13	do
	45,000 "	-	-	-	- 10 50	do
	1,000 "	-	-	-	- 40	do
	10,000 "	-	-	-	- 12	do
1839,	15,000 "	-	-	-	- 10	do
	5,000 "	-	-	-	- 13	do
	3,000 "	-	-	-	- 30	do
	2,950 "	-	-	-	- 40	do
1840,	1,500 "	-	-	-	- 13	do
	3,000 "	-	-	-	- 51	do
	19,000 "	-	-	-	- 8	do

The pay allowed for services of mechanics, laborers, &c., was extravagantly high; mechanics were allowed from two dollars and fifty cents to four dollars per day, and in 1837 as high as *eight* dollars per day was paid. In 1838 an ostler was allowed \$100 per month.

## DEPOT AT JACKSONVILLE.

*Lumber.*

1836, 34,914 feet	-	-	-	-	-	\$497
1837, 271,943 feet	-	-	-	-	-	5,556
1838, 118,490 feet hewn timber, reduced to board measure	-	-	-	-	-	473
1838, 116,236 feet	-	-	-	-	-	3,807
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					Making	-
						-
						10,333

*Mechanics and other laborers.*

1836	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$3,892
1837	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17,063
1838	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,761
							<b>Making</b>	<u>22,716</u>

*Transportation of lumber and materials.*

1836	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$5
1837	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,262
1838	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,063
Making								<u>5,336</u>

*Materials for building, &c.*

1836	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$439
1837	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,336
1838	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,345
Making								<u>23,120</u>

*Shingles.*

1837, 110,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$604
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In 1836 the prices for lumber ranged from \$12 to \$15 per thousand feet; in 1837 they ranged from \$14 50 to \$50 per thousand; in 1838 the following prices were paid, viz:

For 10,213 feet	-	-	-	-	-	\$13 50 per thousand.
22,000 "	-	-	-	-	-	16 50 "
25,000 "	-	-	-	-	-	20 50 "
10,000 "	-	-	-	-	-	25 "
3,000 "	-	-	-	-	-	35 "
2,000 "	-	-	-	-	-	38 "
5,500 "	-	-	-	-	-	40 "
4,000 "	-	-	-	-	-	45 "
16,000 "	-	-	-	-	-	50 "
511 "	-	-	-	-	-	61 25 "
3,800 "	-	-	-	-	-	70 "
3,500 "	-	-	-	-	-	88 "

The residue of the plank purchased during that year was at an average of \$12 per thousand feet. The price of labor seems to have been proportioned to the high charges made for every thing else. On several occasions \$5 per day was paid for superintending the workmen and laborers employed in getting timber and in building. The prices paid for bricks were \$15 and 16 per thousand. The whole cost of this depot, as far as ascertained, is \$62,109!

## DEPOT AT GARY'S FERRY.

*Lumber.*

1836, 120,762 feet, cost	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,852
1837, 589,151 "	-	-	-	-	-	12,363
1838, 441,340 "	-	-	-	-	-	10,178
1839, 161,116 "	-	-	-	-	-	2,984



The total amount of cost of depot at Gary's Ferry is—

For 2,066,129 feet lumber	-	-	-	-	-	\$34,626
529,850 shingles, &c.	-	-	-	-	-	1,542
Materials, &c.	-	-	-	-	-	21,033
Mechanics and laborers	-	-	-	-	-	36,377
Transportation	-	-	-	-	-	5,190
Teamsters	-	-	-	-	-	60,113
Making	-	-	-	-	-	<u>158,881</u>

The same spirit of extravagance seems to have prevailed in reference to the expenditures on these temporary depots as prevailed at the other depots. Lumber was purchased at prices ranging at \$14, \$17 50, \$25, \$40, \$50, \$45, \$50, and \$70 per thousand, through each of the different years mentioned; carpenters were hired by the month at \$2 50, \$3 50, and \$5 per day; common laborers at \$30 per month, and, in several cases, the compensation was increased to \$40 per month. One case attracted the attention of the committee, as to the particular character of extra work he was required to perform for the increased pay over others engaged in similar employment. The increased pay allowed per month was \$10, and the extra duty required therefor was to "*ring the bell and fasten the gates.*" Building materials were purchased at extravagant prices: shingles at \$8 per thousand; clapboards at \$8 75 per thousand; bricks at \$14 per thousand; and wood was purchased at Gary's Ferry at \$4 per cord, and issued to the soldiers there, where an extensive forest surrounded the depot, and where the article could have been obtained for the trouble of cutting it. A pair of oxen and a cart were hired in 1836, for several days in succession, at \$10 per day.

#### DEPOT AT CEDAR KEYS.

##### *Lumber.*

1840, 204,466 feet	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,817
1841, 94,275 "	-	-	-	-	-	1,705
1840, 262,000 shingles	-	-	-	-	-	976
Making	-	-	-	-	-	<u>4,498</u>

##### *Materials for building.*

1840	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,597
1st and 2d quarters of 1841	-	-	-	-	-	4,262
Making	-	-	-	-	-	<u>6,859</u>

##### *Mechanics and other laborers.*

1838	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,454
1839	-	-	-	-	-	180
1840	-	-	-	-	-	6,869
1st and 2d quarters of 1841	-	-	-	-	-	23,067
Making	-	-	-	-	-	<u>32,570</u>



*Transportation.*

1840	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,122
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The committee would remark, that the expenditures connected with this depot are so blended with those for several other similar establishments that it is impossible to separate correctly the amounts of each. Purchases were made for several in the same bill, and the amount for each place not designated. The item of transportation is particularly involved in difficulty; and, to avoid the possibility of doing injustice, the committee have, not only in reference to this depot, but all others, omitted to calculate any amount which could not be certainly determined by the vouchers to belong to a particular depot. The cost, as far as ascertained for 1840 and two quarters of 1841, amounts to \$46,149!

The price of every ingredient entering into the erection of this temporary depot is extravagant. Lumber cost \$9 50 per thousand feet, refuse plank; and the better kind ranged at \$12, \$17, \$18, \$25, \$70, and \$80 per thousand. For 4,250 feet the sum of \$380 was paid. Ordinary negro laborers were hired at \$310 per annum, and those who were called carpenters were hired at \$620 per annum.

The expenses of erecting a depot at Pilatka have proven equally as great as at any other place, and, for the length of time engaged in its erection, the short use which could be made of it, its exceedingly temporary character, being now about to be abandoned, it may be regarded as one of the most inexcusably extravagant that has been erected. The cost of materials, the price and quantity of labor of different kinds employed, bear a comparison with any other expenditures made for similar objects.

*Mechanics and laborers.*

1839	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$279
1840	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40,001
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Making									40,280
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*Teamsters.*

1840	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$14,551
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*Lumber.*

1840, 422,547 feet	}	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$8,712
65,600 shingles		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

The total cost, as far as vouchers have been furnished the committee, (there being none showing the cost of transportation, which may have been made in Government boats, and none for materials for building other than lumber,) is \$63,543!!!

## DEPOT AT ST. AUGUSTINE.

*Materials for building.*

1836	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$6,228
1837	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,886
1838	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,700
1839	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,914
1841	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	210
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Making, in all									17,938
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*Lumber.*

1836,	79,610 feet	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,170
1838,	103,088 "	-	-	-	-	-	2,439
1839,	2,009 "	-	-	-	-	-	50
1841,	91,428 "	-	-	-	-	-	1,980
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Making	276,135 feet	-	-	-	-	-	<u>6,639</u>

*Mechanics and laborers.*

1837	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$216
1838	-	-	-	-	-	-	9,710
1839	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,230
1840	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,332
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Making	-	-	-	-	-	-	<u>18,488</u>

*Transportation.*

1838	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$14,663
1839	-	-	-	-	-	-	325
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Making	-	-	-	-	-	-	<u>14,988</u>

*Shingles.*

1841,	22,000, at \$9	-	-	-	-	-	\$198
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The cost of materials may be inferred from the following extracts from the vouchers :

1836,	51,756 feet lumber, cost	-	-	-	\$15 per thousand feet.	
	4,553 do do do	-	-	-	30 do do	
	35,000 do do do	-	-	-	25 do do	
	2,370 do do do	-	-	-	59 do do	
	2,400 do do do	-	-	-	80 do do	
1838,	9,000 do do do	-	-	-	20 do do	
	74,000 do do do	-	-	-	22 do do	
	60,000 do do do	-	-	-	30 do do	
	1,000 do do do	-	-	-	40 do do	
	2,000 do do do	-	-	-	50 do do	
1839,	2,009 do do do	-	-	-	25 do do	
1841,	16,700 do do do	-	-	-	24 do do	
	3,252 do do do	-	-	-	60 do do	

The total cost, as far as ascertained, of this little temporary depot, is—

Materials, &c.	-	-	-	-	\$17,938
Lumber	-	-	-	-	6,639
Shingles	-	-	-	-	198
Mechanics and laborers	-	-	-	-	18,488
Transportation	-	-	-	-	14,988
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Making	-	-	-	-	<u>58,251 cost !!</u>

There are many other smaller depots or posts in Florida: the cost of each the committee have not attempted to ascertain, because of the embarrassing manner in which the accounts for the various items of expenditure are made up. It would be impossible, without the presence of the disbursing officers, if even with their presence, to make accurate statements as to their cost severally. The committee did not think it proper to call such officers from their duties elsewhere to answer to their inquiries on these points.

As far as they have given their attention to them, however, they can perceive no change, in their character for extravagance, from any of those to which they have more particularly adverted in this report. At St. Mark's, for example, lumber was purchased at prices varying from \$25 to \$40 per thousand feet, and at this place, and at Forts Marion, Jupiter, White, Noel, New Smyrna, Fanning, Pierce, Armstrong, Lauderdale, and others, there were annually expended amounts varying from \$2,000 to \$6,000, for labor, mechanics, or materials for buildings. Many of these depots, garrisons, barracks, or by whatever name they may be called, were designed to be occupied but a short time, and none of them permanently, beyond the end of Indian hostilities; yet, notwithstanding, the utmost extravagance is resorted to in their construction. Framed houses were built, lumber purchased at an enormous price, transported at proportionable cost, carpenters hired to erect the buildings, and all the conveniences and fixtures prepared and attached which are usual in the erection of a homestead, to be occupied through life. The committee can find no instances when, in an Indian war, such practices have been resorted to as in the present case. Troops have always been required to erect their own barracks and depots, and to rely upon their own labor for furnishing the materials out of which all their buildings, for quarters, for depots, and other defences, are made. A similar course to this is, that pursued by the farmers in the settlement of any portion of the new country. A house is erected of logs; the plank in most cases is the result of his own labor; the shingles likewise: so that the only expenditure is for his nails and locks. In such buildings as these, unostentatious but comfortable, the first generation is grown up, without any prejudice to their health or reputation from having been the inmates of such dwellings.

And such might have been the character of the public buildings in Florida. They were to be temporarily inhabited; that was well known; and hence the greatest economy in their construction. The whole Territory, when the hostilities prevailed, and when the greatest expenditures were made, was an undisturbed native forest of the finest timber, affording the best imaginable material for pickets or barracks, block-houses and quarters, being of the first quality of long-leaf pine, easily worked, and of a grain so straight that it might be split into any shape or length, and with whip-saws plank of any kind made; so that the whole of the buildings of every kind might have been erected at no greater cost to the Government than an outlay for tools, and that for hauling the timber from the forest near at hand to the depot. The soldiers could have performed all the necessary labor. The volunteers were required in 1836 to procure the materials, build houses and pickets; and why should not the regular army have done so likewise? All this could and ought to have been done; and then not one of these depots would have cost one-twentieth their present cost. But it seems that it was easier to buy lumber, without reference to its price, than to hew or saw it; and it was the indulgence of greater ease,

to hire the workmanship of others than to perform it themselves. The facts presented by the committee show the result of the latter policy.

It never was the policy of the Government before, in any Indian war, as the committee have before remarked, to place two armies in the field at the same time—one to do the fighting and the other the labor of a war; but in this war, both upon the Indians and the public Treasury, the army proper has been followed at their heels by a regularly organized corps of mechanics. The committee find in the reports of the “receipts and expenditures” the regular organization and pay of such a body of men, most of whom, if not all, were engaged in the Florida war. They present the expenditures for two years, being the amount paid out within them for that service.

*“ Hire of corps of mechanics.*

1833	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$128,279
1839	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	198,420

From this expenditure, it would reasonably be supposed that whatever might require the *skill* of a mechanic was performed by them. Not so; the committee perceive among the accounts annual expenditures for the purchase even of *axe-handles* for each of these depots. The most common article, which the most inferior laborer could prepare, was made the subject of purchase, down even to brooms and broom-handles. Large supplies of these were annually purchased at Savannah, Charleston, and New Orleans, and transported several hundred miles into Florida. High prices are necessarily to be expected, when the seat of war is so far removed from the place of supply; but, in the conduct of the Seminole campaigns, the articles purchased at the place of supply were extravagantly high, even for Florida; and then the transportation is still to be added, as an increased cost. The articles, in themselves were extravagantly selected as to their character, and the whole expenditures seem to wear the aspect of a sincere desire to avoid every suspicion of economy in expending the public money. In reviewing these expenditures, the committee are of opinion that they have not been made in pursuance of the laws authorizing the appropriations, and that the public interest demands prompt and efficient steps to prevent their recurrence. The committee, in a former report on the profligate expenditure of the public money, have pointed to an efficient preventive remedy in the hands of the Executive, and feel it is unnecessary to repeat the expression of an opinion of its proper exercise, in reference to the prodigality and waste of public money herein stated.